

I. Planning and Environmental Review

Introduction

This document serves as the Final Master Plan/Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for Moreau Lake State Park. It describes the park, its existing resources and evaluates alternative actions for preserving resources, improving access and improving or expanding recreational opportunities within the park. Recently, the park has been expanded to include an additional 3,200+ acres. This Master Planning/EIS process was initiated to insure proper management and development of the newly acquired parkland. The planning and environmental review process require that physical, natural, cultural and recreational surveys be conducted to establish a baseline inventory and determine the existing conditions of the park. Summaries of these survey and inventory results are reported in this document. A review and analysis of the survey and inventory information is performed and also included in this document. This analysis is used to develop resource protection and recreation management alternatives and a preferred alternative is selected. This preferred alternative is then developed into the Master Plan for the park. Each alternative is evaluated for potential environmental, operational and fiscal impacts. These evaluations are documented in this report. Lastly the Master Plan is evaluated for its impacts on the environment and the measures that will be taken to avoid and mitigate these impacts are explained.

The Executive Summary summarizes the whole document by giving a brief description of what the park looks like now. It also provides a short overview of the preferred alternative and how it fits the character of the park.

The Questions and Answers section identifies and answers some very common questions often asked by the public and interested groups about the Master Planning/EIS process.

Chapter I describes the planning process used in the development of this plan. It also explains how the Environmental Impact Statement has been incorporated into the planning process and this document. This chapter also briefly identifies the programs and plans of Federal, State and Local agencies that may affect or be affected by this Master Plan.

Chapter II describes the park in great detail and establishes the “Environmental Setting” for the park. The results from the physical, natural and cultural surveys and inventories are reported in this chapter, as well as the current state of the park and its support facilities. This chapter also provides a picture of how the park fits into the local community and the niche it fills in the regional community.

Chapter III defines the vision and goals for the park and this plan. The vision provides an overall direction of what the park should be and how it serves the public. The goals and objectives outlined in this chapter provide direction in how the natural, cultural, recreational, communication and partnership resources are to be used to achieve the vision statement. The goals and objectives help to provide a framework for new construction, staffing and operating procedures associated with park development and management. The vision and goals are designed to be consistent with the statewide recreation goals of the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) and the Agency’s mission statement.

Chapter IV, titled "Analysis and Alternatives", evaluates each element by providing a brief analysis of the existing conditions of the park, resource concerns and concerns identified through the public scoping process. Alternatives for recreation management and development are created as well as alternatives for resource protection and stewardship. These alternatives are then evaluated and a preferred alternative is identified in this chapter.

Chapter V is the Master Plan. This chapter takes the preferred alternative identified in Chapter IV and expands upon it to develop a comprehensive plan for the management and development of the park. This chapter provides operation, staffing, and design guidelines for the park as well as recreation development and management guidelines. A timeline for plan implementation is also outlined in this chapter. Lastly, this chapter identifies any relationships this plan has with other Federal, State, Local and/or non-profit organization plans and programs. How this plan relates to the goals of these other plans and programs is also explained. Potential partnerships with these interest groups, Federal, State or Local agencies and non-profit organizations are identified.

Chapter VI is the result of the environmental analysis of the alternatives and the preferred alternative. This chapter identifies the potential impacts of each alternative described in Chapter IV. It also reviews the potential impacts of the Master Plan. The impacts of the Master Plan are analyzed and described in this chapter as are methods of avoiding impacts and any mitigation measures required during plan implementation.

Chapter VII is the result of the public hearings and the comment period on the Draft Master Plan /DEIS. The comments received from the general public, interested organizations and other State, Federal and Local agencies are published here along with OPRHP's response.

Planning Process

The OPRHP planning process adheres to three basic principles:

- Planning is a continuing process: Assumptions for the classification and management of park resources must be constantly reevaluated in light of new information, changing needs and priorities, and resource character.
- Planning must be comprehensive: The information base, and pertinent additional research, should support the planning process and should encompass relevant social, economic and physical factors relating to the management and operation of the park and its resources.
- Planning must be coordinated and provide for public participation: Cooperation among appropriate governmental organizations, the public at large, special interest groups and the private sector is not only desirable but necessary.

The environmental review of proposed master plans for state park facilities is conducted in accordance with the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQR). OPRHP fully integrates the planning and environmental review processes. This document serves as both the Final Master Plan and the Final Environmental Impact Statement for Moreau Lake State Park.

Moreau Lake State Park, originally a private resort/farm of the McAdam Family, became a State Park in 1967. In 1998, an acquisition of more than 3,200 acres has since tripled the size of Moreau Lake State Park making it more than 4,100 acres in size. Moreau Lake State

Park is now the 10th largest State Park in New York's park system and the largest park of the Saratoga-Capital District Region

Shortly after the acquisition, OPRHP Saratoga-Capital District Region made the decision that, in order to properly manage the expanded park and update the existing facilities, a Master Plan was necessary. OPRHP held two public scoping meetings to gather information from the general public and other State, Local and Federal agencies about the past uses and issues associated with future uses of the park. An advisory group was formed consisting of local governments, adjacent landowners, and State and Federal Agencies to assist with the development of the Plan. Since then OPRHP Saratoga-Capital District Region and Albany Office have been working with the advisory group, the public and consultants to gather physical, natural and cultural resource information about the park. This information is presented in this document and was used to develop the management alternatives found in Chapter IV. A preferred alternative was selected and evolved into the Master Plan.

Relationship to Other Programs

Niagara Mohawk Power Corporation (NiMo) (National Grid)

Although the State acquired significant acreage from Niagara Mohawk, the company retained a network of power line transmission corridors which crisscross the property. OPRHP negotiated a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with NiMo to manage the transmission corridors as state park land. The MOU permits OPRHP to create 12 pedestrian/bicycle power line crossings and 1 vehicular power line crossing for trail and trail head parking development. The remainder of the corridors is not to be used for recreational purposes. Park management of these corridors will consist of enforcing park rules and prohibiting the use of the power line corridors as recreational corridors. This Master Plan includes these lands to establish a management program for the entire land area so that the various ownerships are transparent to the park visitor.

Department of Correctional Facilities/Mount McGregor Correctional Facility

The park has a long common boundary with the Mount McGregor Correctional Facility. In the past the Facility has provided the park with work crews to preserve scenic vistas. OPRHP should pursue a partnership with the Facility to continue this practice.

Erie Boulevard Power/Reliant Energy and its Successors

The Spier Falls and Sherman Island Dam power generating stations are regulated by a license issued by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) to the power company that owns the facilities. These licenses are renewed by the owner on a cycle of 30, 40 or 50 years. The power company was granted a license of 40 years for the Spier Falls and Sherman Island facilities on the Hudson River. When the licensing process is to begin again, OPRHP should be intimately involved with this process as per the terms of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between OPRHP and the power company. Under the current license, the power company is charged with developing and maintaining recreational facilities along a 50-foot corridor of land on both shores of the Hudson River. These facilities include

two boat launches, waterfront campsites and portage trails around the Spier Falls and Sherman Island Dams. Under the terms of the MOU between OPRHP and the power company, OPRHP will be responsible for operating the boat launch and camping facilities so that the change in ownership is transparent to the visitor.

Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC)

There is currently a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between DEC and OPRHP for the operation and maintenance of park lands north of the Hudson River within Warren County. The DEC is the owner of these lands; however, they will be managed and maintained by OPRHP as part of Moreau Lake State Park. Under the terms of the MOU, OPRHP and DEC are to cooperate in the development of a management plan for these lands. DEC has participated in the development of this Master Plan.

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

The developed areas of Moreau Lake State Park (i.e. campground, day use and trails) were constructed before agencies were required to provide facilities for persons with disabilities. As awareness to the needs of persons with disabilities increased, alterations to the park's facilities have been made. The Americans with Disabilities Act –Access Board has developed and proposed new design and development guidelines for providing facilities usable by persons with disabilities. Through recent consultation and evaluation, it has been determined that the Park's facilities do not meet the new design and development guidelines. As the existing facilities and structures require reconstruction, renovation or rehabilitation, the designs applied will conform to the ADA design and development guidelines. Likewise, components that comply with ADA design and development guidelines will be incorporated into plans for new facilities.

Fernwood Fish Hatchery

The Fernwood Fish Hatchery is located southeast of the park. It is in the floodplain of Moreau Lake. OPRHP has an easement and an agreement with the hatchery to maintain drainage structures and culverts through the hatchery property. These drainage structures and culverts help to control runoff from Moreau Lake.

Saratoga County

Saratoga County supports a county-wide fish stocking program and budgets \$21,000 each year for their program. Moreau Lake is included in the County's stocking program. Stocking of Moreau Lake is coordinated through DEC, Fernwood Fish Hatchery and Moreau Lake State Park. The County pays all of the costs for stocking. DEC issues the permits and recommends the number and species of fish to be stocked. The Park should continue the partnership with the County and its program.

Land and Water Conservation Funds (LWCF)

Appropriations from the New York State Land and Water Conservation Fund were used to construct the bathhouse at Moreau Lake. Under the regulations of the LWCF, any park

that receives such funding is granted “6F” protection. This means that no part of the park property can be converted for uses other than public recreation.

American Heritage River

In 1997, Governor George E. Pataki nominated the Hudson River to be designated, in 1998, as an American Heritage River. The 315 miles of river, from its source in Lake Tear of the Clouds to the Verrazano Narrows, and the 19 counties surrounding its shores are included in the Heritage River Area. Moreau Lake State park is included in the Hudson's American Heritage River Area.

The Palmertown Range Trail

The Saratoga-Capital District Park Region is currently working on developing a multiple use trail that will connect Moreau Lake State Park with Saratoga Spa State Park. This trail is still in planning stages and proposes to include Moreau Lake State Park trails in its route -- the Western Ridge Trail and the Ridge Run Trail. As on the Park's trails, the Palmertown Range Trail will permit non-motorized uses.

Summary of Resource Protection and Use Concerns

The following list of resource protection and use concerns was generated through the inventory of resources process and from comments collected during public scoping, and public information meetings held throughout the planning process. These issues and concerns will be considered in the development and selection of alternatives. Please note that the concerns contained in this list are presented in no particular order or priority. All issues and concerns listed are considered equally important to the development of the plan and the Park.

- The stretch of Hudson River within the Park is a quiet, undeveloped and pristine area that should be preserved. It is great for canoeing and kayaking and should not have motorboats of any kind.
- Consider designating part of the park as a Park Preservation Area.
- The Park could be eligible for BCA designation.
- Local residents like the walk-in access to the park.
- Consider expanding winter parking and uses.
- Don't install electricity in campsites; keep the campground open to tents.
- Some groups want electricity installed at the campsites.
- Park trails need to be marked better.
- Enforcement of no ATV use needs to be improved.
- Keep hunting as an activity within the Park
- Consider swimming in the Hudson River, possibly a "swim at your own risk" policy.
- Sign the route to the existing Park entrance better.
- Acquire in-holdings.
- There are restrictions with some designations.
- Consider providing more cabin or cottages within the park. They could possibly be located along the river.
- Snowmobiles, ATV's and equestrians should be limited to separate, designated areas/trails.
- Don't charge for activities that are now experienced for free (boat launching, riverside camping and swimming.)
- Hiking and hunting are two activities best suited for the expanded park property.
- Include mountain biking as an activity within the Park.

- Redesign the Park entrance. Possibly develop separate entrances for day users and campers.
- Some of the Moreau Lake campsites are in poor condition due to use impacts (i.e. soil compaction, scarred trees, pad creep and erosion).
- Trees in the picnic/day use area are stressed from soil compaction.
- Utilize the property between Route 9 and Old Saratoga Road.
- Provide a swimming beach for campers.
- Rehabilitate, renovate and/or expand the Moreau Lake camping area.
- Construction of the Spier Falls and Sherman Island Dams are great topics for historic interpretation.
- Interpret the logging industry and the log drives on the Hudson River.
- The character and capacity of the Hudson River corridor should not be destroyed by more intensive types of uses.
- There is a PCB site at the end of Hartman Hill.
- Provide boat access from Queensbury.
- Eagles are seen on the river in spring.
- Consider providing take-off/landing locations for hang gliders.
- Preserve the scenery and vistas in the Park.
- Explore the potential for rock climbing in the park.
- Make trails accessible to persons with disabilities.
- Parking, pedestrian and bicycle use along Spier Falls Road is dangerous because there is not enough shoulder space.
- Don't allow PWC's on the river.
- Litter along the river and Spier Falls Road is a problem.
- The Hudson River area is a hawk watch area.
- Karner Blue Butterflies may exist within the Park.
- The river is used by ice-fishermen in the winter.